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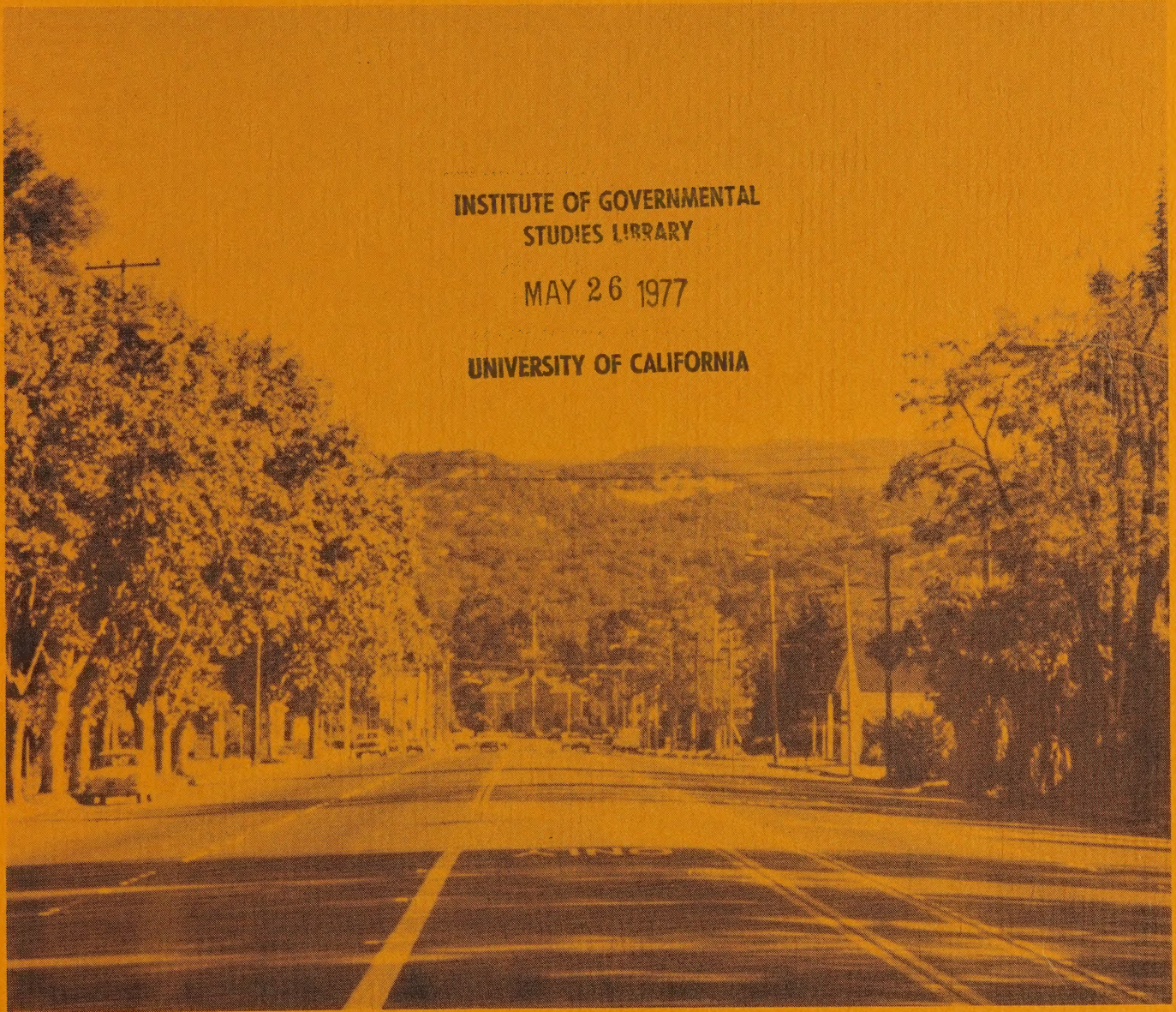
# GENERAL PLAN

## City of Sonoma, California

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# GENERAL PLAN

## City of Sonoma, California



1974

Adopted by the Sonoma City Planning Commission  
August 26, 1974

Adopted by the Sonoma City Council,  
September 10, 1974

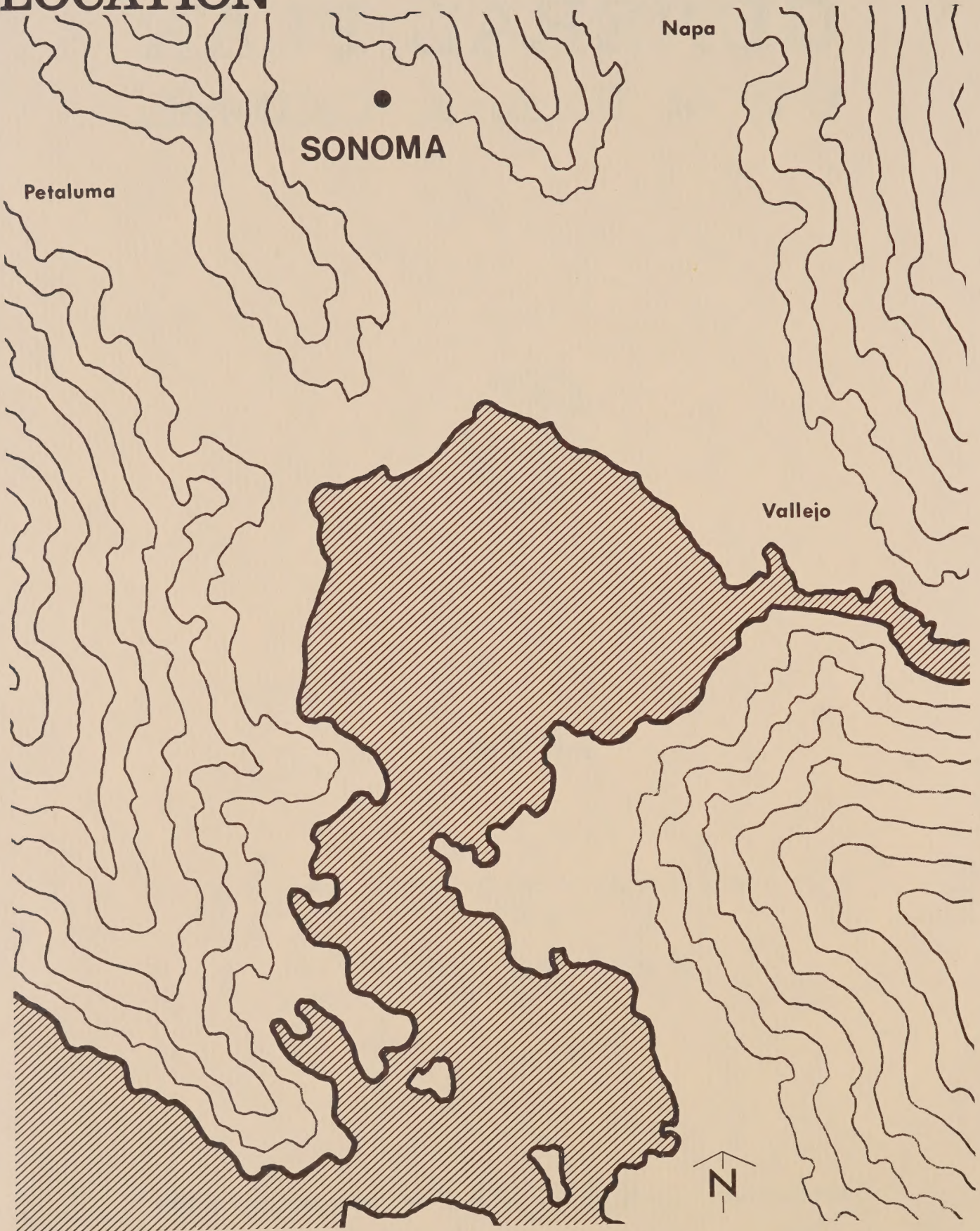
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# LOCATION





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# Foreword

## THE FUTURE OF SONOMA

Few California communities enjoy a setting of more natural beauty and richer wealth of history than Sonoma. Located below a backdrop of wooded hills where the Sonoma Valley abruptly narrows, Sonoma unfolds about the central plaza adjoining California's last Franciscan mission begun in 1823. The City was founded by people who longed for land and independence. It was they who overthrew Mariano Vallejo's secular government during the Bear Flag Revolt of 1846 and helped pave the way for California's annexation to the United States in 1848.

Today as urban growth spreads further and further from the metropolitan centers of the Bay Area, Sonoma can yet look forward to retaining much of its rural character and historic charm. The rate of growth is manageable. Sonoma's relative inaccessibility is balanced by the agricultural productivity of surrounding lands. Together these factors have resisted the transition to suburban development which is more persistent in areas to the east and west. The Petaluma-Santa Rosa growth corridor along Highway 101 to the west, for instance,

is easily reached from the central Bay Area and from points to the north. Similarly, the lower Napa Valley east of Sonoma, which contains large amounts of developable land is more convenient than Sonoma to points of growth connected by Highway 80. To the south of Sonoma, development is limited by marsh and wetland. The narrowness of the Valley of the Moon to the north of Sonoma discourages far-reaching expansion from Santa Rosa. Thus Sonoma has a good opportunity to preserve its wooded hills, its creeks, its rural atmosphere and small town character - to achieve those goals set forth in the Statement of Community Goals.

The plan for the future of Sonoma presented in this document comes at a time when changes in state law and community attitudes towards growth have made the existing Sonoma Valley General Plan out-of-date. This new plan focuses specifically on the City of Sonoma and its surroundings. It will become part of a revised Sonoma Valley General Plan and ultimately part of a revised Sonoma County General Plan. The plan for Sonoma portrays a balanced community.



# Sonoma Setting



Air Photo Co., Inc.



# Introduction

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF PLANNING ?

Over the next 20 years, Sonoma will experience a growth in population due to the birth of new children within the community and to the expected influx of people who are drawn from outside by Sonoma's fine climate, rural character, natural beauty and other assets. The increase of people means there will be additional buildings, houses, stores, and industries which all make demands for new roads and other public utilities and services.

| <u>YEAR</u> | <u>POPULATION</u> |
|-------------|-------------------|
| 1920        | 801               |
| 1940        | 1158              |
| 1960        | 3023              |
| 1970        | 4241              |

How can Sonoma best achieve a balanced community which offers the volume and variety of activities necessary to accommodate newcomers and to provide a livelihood for all residents? How can new vitality be brought to the community in harmony with historic continuity? The purpose of planning is to decide answers to the above kinds of questions.

## WHAT IS A GENERAL PLAN?

Planning is a process which enables a community to take a good look at itself and decide what it wants for the future. Answers to such broad questions as city size and appearance and to such specific questions as vehicular circulation

and creekside parks emerge. Planning involves the determination of community needs, the identification of opportunities, the discussion of long-range community goals and the establishment of a course of action for future development.

The principal planning document used to record needs, opportunities, goals and official policies is the general plan. Including both written and illustrative material, the general plan constitutes a common base of understanding for both private citizens and public officials. Its maps and diagrams provide a picture of what the community should look like in the future and the plan's written material describes these long-range goals and explains how they can be achieved.

Thus, the general plan does three things:

1. It allows the collection of a wide range of ideas and considerations into a single comprehensive document where they are integrated with a definite set of policies that will govern future development and a general design that expresses these policies.
2. It simplifies the decision making duties of planning commissioners and city council members by enabling them to review all proposals in light of a clear picture of desirable future development.
3. It provides a common base of understanding which enables public agencies and private property owners to relate their projects to a common goal.



Contents of a particular general plan are, of course, tailored to a specific city. Sonoma's geographic location and historic development, for instance, are unique to Sonoma. Basic contents of a general plan are, however, prescribed by State law (Government Code Section 65300). Each city's general plan must contain certain "elements" - information pertaining to land use, circulation, housing, open space and conservation.

HOW SHOULD THE PLAN BE USED?  
HOW PRECISE IS IT?

Legally, the General Plan is the City Council's comprehensive statement of basic goals and policies. It is "general" in nature so that an overall picture of the community can be shown. The General Plan provides an overall framework which must be augmented by precise plans for actual projects at later stages. For example, the concept of a strong town center with closely related historic, civic and shopping activities is shown in the General Plan but precise acreage, precise location, and precise design of the various components is worked out at the time the various parts are developed. In the case of a public project, precise plans are worked out to the best of the City's ability at the time private property is purchased. In the case of private development, a precise plan is worked out before the owner applies for a building permit. In some instances it is very important to achieve a particular urban character. Architectural treatment around the plaza is one example. Community facilities for youngsters and for elderly citizens is another. It is sometimes appropriate to describe such special features in a general plan with illustrations or words so that these can be considered in working out the details

of purchase or development.

From time to time new circumstances or changing aspirations may warrant an amendment to the General Plan. One reason may be a change in state law requiring the addition of new general plan "elements". Another may be the need to substantially increase the area shown in the Plan to accommodate a particular activity. When such changes are required, the Plan should be amended by the same process of public hearings as are held for its original adoption. It must be emphasized that many facets of the City are in equilibrium in the Plan. Thus when a change is proposed, it is important to consider what other effects it may have on the Plan. A series of related changes may be required or it may be apparent that the proposed change is not desirable at all.

## Statement of Community Goals

Citizen involvement in the preparation of Sonoma's General Plan was achieved by inviting every interested resident of Sonoma, and the areas surrounding Sonoma, to a series of traditional Town Meetings. Ideas and comments recorded at the first of these meetings formed the basis of the officially adopted statement of community goals which follows:

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Over the years Sonoma has become a unique, historic town with a wealth of natural and man-made beauty. There



is a great sense of place in Sonoma. People have thoughtfully preserved some older buildings while introducing a refreshing mixture of new styles. There is natural, on-going concern, therefore, about typical suburban subdivisions of single family houses on small lots which reduce Sonoma's semi-rural character and there is concern about widespread development of multi-family housing of poor appearance which seems out of place in single family neighborhoods. Similarly, there is concern about large commercial centers of a type not compatible with Sonoma's small town character and there is concern about unsightly industries within the city limits. There is also concern about preserving natural creeks, the lush backdrop of wooded hills and the long-range vitality of agricultural activities.

Although many concerns are stated in visual terms there are strong underlying social and economic concerns which must not be overlooked. People in Sonoma presently enjoy good schools, fine hospitals and a core of good businesses which provide employment. There is concern in general about becoming a bedroom community in the future, consisting solely of retired people and commuters. There is concern, too, for the children of longtime residents who must leave Sonoma in search of employment opportunities. And there is concern about large school problems and the overuse of recreation facilities in the future. People are concerned about providing new community facilities including government offices, a public library and a range of places for cultural events and informal meetings of all age groups.

These concerns cover a wide range of issues. The following general goals pertain to Community Development and guided the preparation of the General Plan.

#### Community Development Goals

1. Achieve a balanced community with respect to age, occupation, income, choice of shopping and housing.
2. Expand employment opportunities for Sonoma's residents.
3. Provide for growth consistent with Sonoma's basic character as a semi-rural, small-scale community.
4. Enlarge Sonoma's recreational benefits by acquiring additional park land and creating trails along creeks and in the hills.
5. Develop adequate community meeting facilities and additional opportunities for social associations among Sonoma's residents, young and old.
6. Enhance Sonoma's appearance with landscaping, underground utilities and attractive signs.

#### CIRCULATION

As more and more people move to the Sonoma area, more and more automobiles will travel Sonoma's streets carrying people to schools, to businesses, to meetings and back. As Sonoma grows more people will be involved simply to bring in materials and supplies. There is concern about pedestrian safety, adequate parking, annoying waits in traffic and noise. There is concern about the effects of strip commercial development which complicates both parking and traffic flow. And there is concern about the volume of traffic which moves through Sonoma to outside destinations.

There is more to circulation than strictly



the movement of motor vehicles, however. People in Sonoma are interested in showing the city to tourists. And there is interest in the development of special paths and routes for pedestrians and bicyclists which avoid the heavily traveled vehicular routes but provide access to Sonoma's centers of activity.

#### Circulation Goals

1. Develop alternate vehicular routes to carry undesirable, through traffic around Sonoma.
2. Increase pedestrian and parking facilities to reduce congestion around the Plaza.
3. Provide safe, convenient access to Sonoma's centers of activity.

#### CONSERVATION

Sonoma's most valuable asset is its great heritage. Geographically, Sonoma's uniqueness is determined by Sonoma Creek and by the backdrop of wooded hills. As an urban place, the city's sense of identity is strongly determined by the historic central plaza and the axiality of the grid street pattern. Generations of residents have upheld the traditional concern for the natural environment and have participated in the success of those agricultural lands which have resisted urban sprawl. People in Sonoma are concerned about the future of that heritage.

#### Conservation Goals

1. Promote historic preservation.
2. Ensure historic continuity.
3. Protect Sonoma's vineyards and the city's agricultural setting.
4. Preserve natural areas including the wooded hills, the creeks and open space for wildlife.

#### IMPLEMENTATION

A strong desire for local self-government began as early as 1846 in Sonoma with the Bear Flag Revolt which overthrew Mexican rule. A similar spirit is manifest in the desire to continue guiding the nature and pace of growth in the general Sonoma area. People are concerned about having an up-to-date General Plan and zoning ordinance for the City itself, and there is very strong concern about the form growth may take in those areas surrounding the city.

People in Sonoma are aware that general community support is needed for success of the General Plan. There is concern for an equitable distribution of expectations from the Plan and an awareness that some compromises must be made for the benefit of the community as a whole.

#### Implementation Goals

1. Develop strong land use controls to guide effectively the future changes in Sonoma's Physical growth.
2. Encourage citizen participation in Sonoma's government.
3. Develop taxing policy which favors open space.
4. Monitor growth in the area surrounding Sonoma and coordinate with County and State plans.

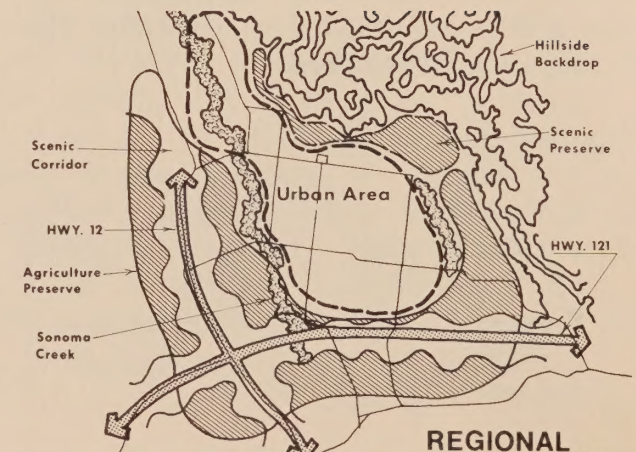


# General Plan

## Key Proposals

### REGIONAL LEVEL

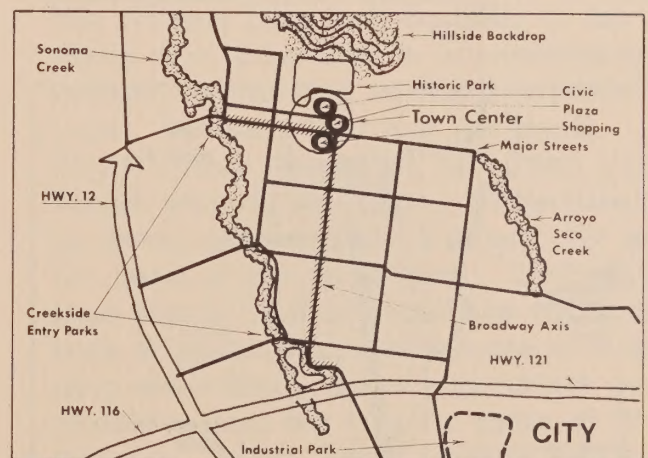
Sonoma will continue to be the urban center of the Sonoma Valley in the future. It is proposed that the City work towards implementing the concept of a strong town center by guiding new commercial and civic uses to vacant land near the Plaza rather than in strip development as the area grows. Unification of Sonoma with surrounding areas is encouraged to consolidate diverse public utility and service systems within the Sonoma Valley watershed. It is proposed that the future enlargement of Sonoma itself, other than potential annexation in the direction of the Valley of the Moon, be confined to the east side of the natural Sonoma Creek barrier with any additional water and sewer lines sized according to population concentrations shown in the General Plan. It is proposed that important agricultural lands, now surrounding Sonoma, be emphasized in the General Plan and that activity on them be encouraged to continue indefinitely into the future. These agricultural lands establish scenic corridors through which the regional circulation system passes, and they help establish logical limits to the expanded city. Through traffic between regional destinations is routed around Sonoma. East-west travel is shown using the state adopted future route for Highways 121 and 116. It is proposed that Highway 12 be redesignated along Arnold Drive south of Petaluma Avenue for major north-south travel in the vicinity of Sonoma and that an internal route be developed simply for historic purposes and internal circulation.





## CITY LEVEL

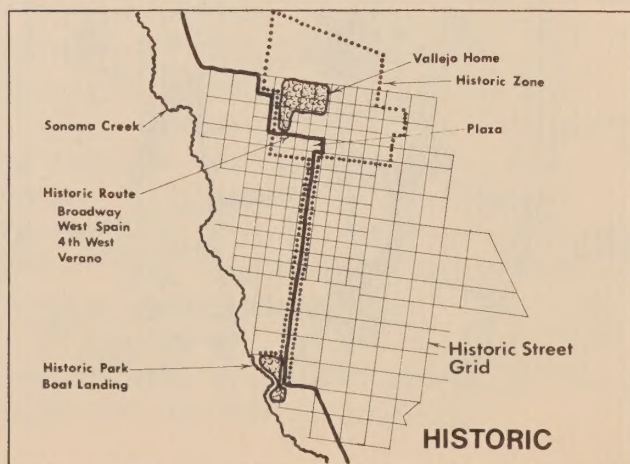
Significant natural and man-made features combined with agricultural lands help determine a logical boundary for the expanded future city. Sonoma Creek and Arroyo Seco Creek bracket Sonoma's future east-west growth. Development in a southerly direction is naturally curtailed by wetlands. State historical lands to the north prevent Sonoma from expanding all the way to the hills and, in fact, combine with agricultural lands to ring Sonoma with open space. Major access to Sonoma from the external circulation system is proposed through important creekside entry parks along Sonoma Creek at the foot of Broadway and at the end of West Napa Street. Proposed tree planting accentuates the major, historic Broadway axis and the secondary Napa Street axis which focus on the proposed Town Center at the Plaza. The Town Center proposal consists of concentrating new commercial uses and new civic facilities near the historic Plaza using design review procedures to help insure compatible architecture. Implementation of the Town Center concept ensures efficient use of presently vacant land near the heart of the city and the continued vitality of the historic Plaza area. To ensure a balance of employment potential, Sonoma's industrial area is shown concentrated at the most competitive regional position near the major new east-west highway (State route 116-121) where it is accessible by road, rail and air. It is proposed that existing industrial uses along 8th Street East be recognized and retained, but screened from surrounding uses. Ample room for residential growth is proposed.





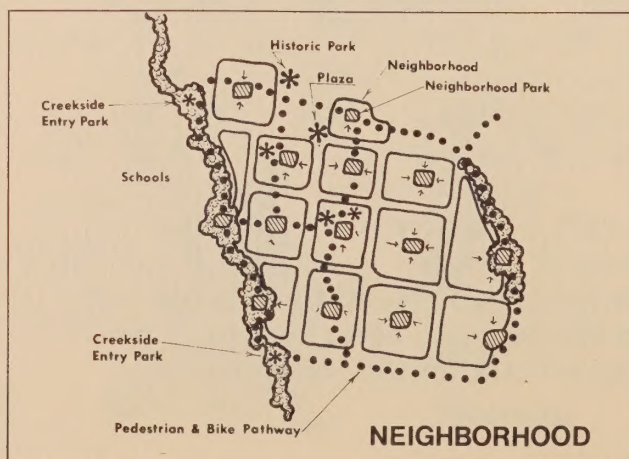
## HISTORIC INFLUENCES

Much of Sonoma's subtle charm can be related to the way in which the wooded hills and tall creek vegetation form a dramatic backdrop for ordinary vistas. Additionally, views along many streets are framed by mature trees. It is proposed that Sonoma continue to implement the historic street grid system surveyed by O'Farrell which accommodates these views. As platted, Broadway is the central feature of the grid, beginning at an historic boat landing at Sonoma Creek and terminating at the Plaza. The grid grows larger with distance from the Plaza, thus there is historic precedence for a distinct city center with larger land holdings on the periphery. Over the years the Mountain Cemetery and Vallejo State Park have been established north of the Plaza. It is proposed that a zone of historic influence be created to include Broadway, the Plaza and the hill area north of the Plaza. A proposed historic route, designed to provide maximum exposure to these historic areas, is shown within the zone of historic influence. Design review is proposed along the historic route in addition to that for plaza buildings and the City is encouraged to work with the State towards acquisition of additional hill land to protect Sonoma's historic setting.



## NEIGHBORHOOD LEVEL

Neighborhoods are defined by the historic street grid of approximately one-half mile square which expands out from the Plaza. Highest intensity residential is proposed in neighborhoods nearest the Town Center while the lowest intensity residential is intermixed with intensive agricultural development to the northeast. Sonoma's Town Center, with civic, commercial and historic uses combined, continues and expands the concept of a community focus now provided by the Plaza at the terminus of Broadway. A similar but smaller scale repetition of the community focus is proposed for development within future neighborhoods formed by the major street grid system. It is proposed that the City develop small plaza parks to emphasize the residential character of neighborhoods and to discourage through traffic. In many instances, these neighborhood centers can be set aside through the subdivision regulations as future areas are developed. In other instances where the neighborhood has already been developed the City must acquire the land. The City should make every effort to achieve neighborhood plaza parks in the general locations shown in the General Plan to achieve continuity and to carry out the historic pattern.





# Community Development

Sonoma's General Plan preparation involved the extensive study of a great many factors including existing institutions, growth pressures of population and limitations of the natural environment. Sonoma's urban influence should extend north into the resort areas of the Sonoma Valley, south towards Schellville and in an east-west direction into the hills. A more definite boundary should be determined by the City working in conjunction with the Local Agency Formation Commission and the Sonoma County Planning Department. A general boundary for urban services should generally coincide with the ultimate growth of Sonoma shown in the General Plan. Ultimate growth, of course, may change with new concepts in the future. The General Plan looks ahead at least as far as 1995 and projects services based upon an ultimate population of 20-25,000 persons within the area covered by this General Plan. A separate Sonoma Valley Plan, prepared by the Sonoma County Planning Department will set forth policies for development in the remainder of Sonoma Valley. Ultimate population holding capacity for both this and the valley plan should be approximately 45,000 people.

## PUBLIC FACILITIES

### A New City Hall

Sonoma's council-manager government is housed in the distinctive building in the center of Sonoma Plaza. The structure and its surroundings contribute to the strong image and awareness many people have of the city's govern-

ment. Additional space is needed, however, and the need will become more urgent as Sonoma's population increases. Administrative offices, various commissions, local police services, court facilities, community meeting rooms and a new library could be brought together in a new facility. Only local fire service should continue to be housed in dispersed locations. A new civic facility to house these activities should be built near the Plaza. The Plan shows an appropriate location for such a civic facility at the extension of 2nd Street West at Spain Street. This location has good pedestrian and vehicular access and can contribute to the vitality of the Town Center as well as take full advantage of the dramatic backdrop of hills. Surrounding park land will preserve the open setting of this new civic facility. Imaginative civic architecture and proper landscape screening must be required to insure the facility's compatibility with surrounding uses and Sonoma's small-scale image.

### The Present Plaza Buildings

The present City Hall building in the Plaza should be used to accommodate cultural events and community gatherings. The City Hall and the small Plaza library should not be turned into single purpose museums. They should be developed as centers of activity in the heart of the community. Both buildings should contain facilities for meetings or instruction and a range of evening activities. Other appropriate uses should reflect the historic roots of Old Sonoma. These would include arts and crafts as well as history.



### Schools - Background

Sonoma is served by the Sonoma Valley Unified School District which includes most of the Sonoma Valley. Within the city limits are Prestwood and Sassarini Elementary Schools and Sonoma High School. Altimira Junior High, a continuation school, and additional elementary schools exist in the surrounding area. Sonoma, like many communities expanded its school district capacity when post-World War II children began causing an unprecedented crowding. A return to lower enrollment levels in recent years (presently one-fourth to one school aged children per dwelling in Sonoma) has helped the school district to achieve lower class sizes (25 students). The private St. Francis Solano School on West Napa Street attracts some 400 students in grades 1-8 from throughout the Valley. Additions and improvements to various public schools financed by school bonds have also helped.

### The Plan

The Plan shows Sonoma High School continuing to expand and rebuild its present facility to accommodate future enrollments. Additional schools will be needed for future elementary and junior high students. An appropriate central location for a facility to accommodate both elementary and intermediate age groups is shown in the Maxwell Farms area.

### Maxwell Farms Site

This area of land should be used principally for public facilities, both because of its geographic location in the Valley as well as its key role as an open space link between Sonoma Creek and the nearby hillsides.

### Public Facilities Policies:

1. New civic facilities should be located close to the Plaza to promote a pedestrian scale and to insure the vitality of Sonoma's Town Center.
2. The City should enhance Sonoma's appearance with landscaping, programs of utility undergrounding and appropriate sign controls.
3. The City should promote an active Town Center with adequate meeting facilities which can provide opportunities for social associations among Sonoma's residents, young and old.
4. The City should work with the school district to monitor growth which may have an adverse impact on existing and proposed school facilities.

## PUBLIC UTILITIES

### Water Supply

Historically, Sonoma has had ample water from wells and springs. However, as more and more people were attracted to the 62 square mile watershed of Sonoma Creek, it became clear that there was not enough good water during dry seasons. In the early 1960's Sonoma formed a municipal water company to purchase water from the Sonoma County Water Agency which has jurisdiction over the Sonoma Aqueduct. Water storage tanks were built north and east of Sonoma in the hills and water contracts assure Sonoma of an adequate supply for fire or drought. Sonoma annually consumes 500-750 million gallons. Consolidation of the city water system with the Valley of the Moon County Water District serving the rest of Sonoma Valley is consistent with the implementation of a revised Sonoma Valley General Plan. County areas surrounding Sonoma, especially those to the southeast, are not presently supplied with imported water.



Lines can be built to serve these areas. They should be designed to serve no more than the population shown in the General Plan.

#### Sewers

Sonoma's sewer system is an old one with many lines in need of repair or replacement. The main trunk lines combine waste flow from the north Valley area and from Sonoma and carry it largely by gravity flow to the Schellville Treatment Plant south of the city. Discharges from this primary treatment facility presently do not meet State Water Quality requirements. The City should work with the Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District to implement improvements to the overall treatment system as soon as possible.

#### Sewer Trunk Lines

In improving the sewer system itself, two very important considerations exist. A proposed sewer trunk line, following the old railroad right-of-way along the west side of Sonoma Creek, has been designed to bypass Sonoma with waste flow from urban areas in the north Valley. This trunk line should have the capacity to serve only the areas to the north. It should not provide excess capacity to stimulate development in the areas adjacent to the railroad right-of-way between Petaluma Avenue and Schellville. Similarly, a proposed trunk line following 8th Street East should be sized according to the concentration of population shown in the General Plan. A sewer system should be installed in this eastern area of Sonoma prior to much additional development because the high winter water table in this area can create unsafe, unsanitary conditions if the present pattern of septic systems is continued.

#### Flood Control - Creeks

Flood control is the responsibility of the Sonoma County Water Agency. Storm drainage consists largely of existing creeks and drainage channels which carry runoff south towards San Pablo Bay. Proposals to channelize natural creeks are no longer generally acceptable. As urban development continues, however, flood problems will be more common. Channel separation to divert excess flow away from a natural creek is one way of preserving a creek's natural setting. Flood plain zoning is another way and is in effect along Sonoma Creek and is used to keep development away from sensitive and flood prone areas. Its use should be considered along other smaller creeks. The General Plan Map shows linear parks taking advantage of this type of zoning along many stretches of creeks within the city.

#### Public Utilities Policies:

1. Water and sewer lines serving future areas of development should be sized in accordance with concentrations of population shown in the General Plan. Excess capacity should be provided only as required for safety purposes.
2. The City should improve its sewage treatment facility and replace unsafe and unsanitary portions of the overall system.
3. The City should work with the Sonoma County Water Agency to preserve the natural character of Sonoma's creeks.

#### RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

##### Historic Perspective

Sonoma is fortunate to have grown slowly over its 150 years of existence. Historic continuity is evident in diverse



building styles and this historic influence is evident in the early establishment of a compact city center with residential areas close by.

#### Housing Condition

In spite of Sonoma's age, its housing condition is remarkably sound. Less than one-half of one percent of Sonoma's 1727 residences, according to the 1970 Census, were considered substandard because of overcrowding, inadequate toilet facilities or inadequate kitchen facilities.

#### Rate of Development

New units constructed between 1970 and 1973 averaged 58 units per year throughout the city; a modest rate but significant when put in historic perspective.

#### Residential Development and the General Plan

Since most of the developed land in cities today is used for residential purposes, the disposition of residential development is of extreme importance in the general planning process. It is from residential development that demand grows for other land uses, like commercial areas, schools and parks. From it also grows the demand for public facilities and services, like utilities and roads.

#### Four Basic Residential Categories

Sonoma's General Plan distinguishes four basic residential categories: multi-family residential, urban residential, suburban residential and country residential. Residences in the agricultural area and in the hillside area are treated separately in the Environmental Resource section. Zoning, when revised to conform to the General Plan, should provide more than four categories but

densities should relate to these basic four groupings of multi-family, urban, suburban and country.

Multi-family residential is the most intensive form of residential development. In the Plan, it includes garden apartments, condominiums, town houses and the special residential class of mobile home estates. Accordingly, multi-family densities range from 7 to 15 units per acre. As shown in the Plan, this land use designation will affect 6% of residential land in the Plan's area. It will contain 26% of the total projected population. Multi-family residential land is an important category because it can provide Sonoma the opportunity for having a sufficient supply of low cost owner units and low cost rentals. This type of land also costs the City less to provide roads, water and sewer service than does dispersed housing. Frequently the City can bargain successfully for open space provisions, and with a proper zoning ordinance and City review, quality design and landscaping can be assured. Multi-family residential is shown in the Plan to be concentrated northwest and southwest of the Town Center. The concentration is necessary for a number of important reasons:

- a) Access to the major natural amenity of Sonoma Creek.
- b) Access to employment, shopping, medical and educational facilities.
- c) Access to the external circulation system.
- d) Potential mix with commercial and professional office uses to improve the appearance and vitality of Sonoma's western entrance.

Urban residential is presently the predominant land use in Sonoma. In the Plan this category includes single



family and two-family residences. It represents the character found in Sonoma's fine established neighborhoods where an average of four dwellings per acre exists. Approximately 36% of the land in Sonoma is presently devoted to single family dwellings. In the 1970 Census 72% of these units were owner occupied and overall the median value of owner occupied units was \$20-25,000. As many as 96% of the homes are single family dwellings in the areas south-east of the Plaza while 67% of those northwest of the Plaza are single family. Urban density residential has historic significance in Sonoma and it helps make up the compact image many people perceive of Sonoma. In the Plan, urban residential constitutes 25% of residential land use overall and 40% of the total projected population in the urban service area. It is shown in the Plan as an enlargement, primarily to the south along Broadway, of the existing developed part of Sonoma. Additional urban residential land is important for those who enjoy living close to the center of activity in a city setting. Urban residential will contribute to the historic urban approach experienced along Broadway from the south towards the Town Center. The location is also important because it is along established utility installations, thus intense development east of 5th Street East is not encouraged.

Suburban residential includes most of the scattered development which surrounds Sonoma. It consists primarily of single family homes on large lots and includes most of the small ranches. Much of Sonoma's rural character can be attributed to the large amounts of open land in this peripheral area. Suburban residential presently is limited to large lots by virtue of health re-

strictions which require adequate space for septic fields as there are no sewer lines in most of the outlying area. However, the high winter water table in the entire area east of 5th Street East to the hills and generally south of Leveroni and Old Napa Road can create unsafe, unsanitary conditions. A carefully sized sewer system is needed for this area and is discussed in the Public Utilities section on Sewer Trunk Lines.

Suburban residential is based on a maximum density of two units per acre. Although uniform subdivision of all land which is designated suburban residential into one-half acre lots is not expected, the one-half acre lot is a manageable size and retains a semi-rural character with ample space for generous setbacks. More importantly, the suburban density allows an opportunity to develop in accordance with planned unit development procedures where a small portion of a large property can be used for a cluster of single family homes which simplifies the extension of public utilities and the remainder dedicated as permanent open space. In the Plan, suburban residential constitutes 49% of the residential land use overall and accounts for 32% of the total projected population in the urban service area.

Country residential is the least intensive form of recognized residential development. It includes those areas where homes are intermixed with but not necessarily associated with intensive agricultural activities. Country residential is based on a density of three residences for every 10 acres of land. Its location in the Plan generally coincides with that where vineyards and wineries are most prominent north



and northeast of the Town Center. Country residential, like suburban residential, should be encouraged to develop in accordance with planned unit development procedures so that Sonoma's semi-rural setting is preserved. Country residential is located primarily in the upland areas where use of septic systems is reasonably successful. Although municipal water must be brought in, an extension of the sewer system is not recommended. In the Plan country residential constitutes 20% of the residential land use overall and accounts for only 2% of the total projected population in the urban service area.

#### Residential Development Policies:

1. Most intensive forms of residential growth should be guided toward the areas west of the Town Center near Sonoma Creek.
2. All housing should exhibit careful design that complements the rural and historic character of Sonoma.
3. The City should encourage a range of housing to ensure that every family has the opportunity to live in a sound unit, large enough to accommodate its members, at a reasonable cost.
4. The City will encourage the use of Planned Unit Development procedures or other appropriate development approaches to achieve open space and sensitive site design in residential proposals involving more than two units by the same person.
5. Developments with curvilinear streets should be discouraged. (See policy #7 - Circulation).

## COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

As Sonoma's population grows, commercial, institutional and industrial activities should increase proportionately to provide services and places to shop and do business. This proportionate growth of employment and population is what keeps a community in healthy balance and provides the economic base necessary to provide good quality parks, schools and other public improvements. Variety, location and amount are three important aspects of employment growth. Variety of employment opportunities is an important part of community balance because it means that children growing up in Sonoma can stay and continue its traditions; it also means that new arrivals to Sonoma may represent a broad range of interests and activities. Locations for employment are planned so that they are accessible to the population they serve, and so that the different types relate properly to one another. Similarly, the amount of area planned for employment relates to the supporting local population and to forces of the surrounding population.

#### Employment Base

Sonoma is fortunate to have a strong and diverse employment base on which to build for the future. The diverse agriculture based industries comprise one of Sonoma's principal employers. Most widely known is the wine industry begun in the 1850's. Four wineries thrive on Sonoma's temperate coastal climate and the presence of suitable Class 1 and 2 agricultural soils found in the northeast corner of the lower Sonoma Valley. The wine industry is given special recognition in the General Plan because of these locational features. Less known, perhaps, than



the wine industry, but nevertheless very potent economically are the extensive pear orchards, dairy farms and the turkey breeding industry. Each is important individually for the full time and seasonal employment they provide. Collectively, these agricultural industries make up the Agriculture "green belt" shown in the General Plan Map. These agricultural industries are expected to continue well into the future and will help form a logical limit to Sonoma's outward expansion.

Education and government are basic public services and, in Sonoma, a significant part of the employment base. Teachers, school administrators and government employees comprise a large employment sector. Employment can be expected to increase in proportion to the increase of the population.

Industry is also a part of Sonoma's employment profile. At present, several manufacturing firms have located along the railroad which parallels 8th Street East. As Sonoma develops, these industries may become objectionable to surrounding residents. Additional industries along 8th Street East would surely add unwanted traffic and noise. Therefore, the present industries east of the railroad tracks are recognized in the General Plan along 8th Street East as existing but incompatible uses which require special treatment. Such industries should be hidden with dense landscaping, earth berms, or other devices which screen views and help reduce any annoying noise, dust or unpleasant odor.

### A New Industrial Area

Sonoma's future industrial growth should take place at a location which is most competitive from a regional standpoint. Many places in the Bay Area have a combination of accessibility by air, water and land. Sonoma has no deep water port, yet light manufacturing or research and development activities could take advantage of Sonoma's small Sky Park airport, the convergence of the existing Northwestern Pacific and Southern Pacific Railroads, the future routing of Highway 121 and the presence of a major Pacific Gas and Electric transmission line. These features define a regionally competitive location for light industry south of the future alignment of Highway 121 and east of 8th Street East. The location is peripheral to Sonoma's future growth thus promising not only easy regional access, but minimal through traffic and disturbance from noise. The location is also close to the sewage treatment plant and can be serviced by water and power. An industrial area of slightly over two hundred acres is shown in the Plan and reflects a scale of demand reasonably anticipated by the future work force. This area should be developed as an industrial park; that is, with individual facilities clustered together and designed and landscaped to merge with the surrounding rural lands.

### Commercial Areas

Sonoma's commercial employment facilities, which contribute significantly to the community's character, are historically concentrated around the Plaza. There, tourist attractions and stores serving the daily needs of the local population blend together. A sense of history is thus successfully maintained for the daily routine of Sonoma's residents.



### Town Center

At the present time nearly one-third of all the private land within the city limits is essentially undeveloped, and large amounts of this land are near the Plaza. Sonoma can ensure the vitality of the traditional central commercial location by guiding new commercial growth to this area of open land near the Plaza. In the General Plan Map the Town Center extends generally along and south of West Napa Street from the Plaza to 3rd Street West. To designate additional commercial land near the Center or to spread retail uses to other centers could exceed the population's ability to support the uses adequately and would tend to dilute the city's overall employment potential. Strengthening the Town Center will, as the city grows, benefit employment because new businesses are attracted to active and healthy centers.

### The Town Center and the Plan

Professional business offices should be intermixed with the retail center and used as a buffer on the periphery of the Center between retail and residential areas. The Town Center's location will help Sonoma retain a pedestrian scale. It will also reduce the need for some automobile traffic in the future merely by its proximity to multi-family areas.

### Other Commercial Locations

Not all commercial uses should be concentrated in the Town Center. Building and garden material suppliers are, for instance, compatible with residential uses when buffered properly with fences and building setbacks. Neighborhood Convenience shopping must, by definition, serve outlying residents. Neighborhood commercial is shown in the Plan and generally refers to small

grocery markets, gas stations and eating places clustered near an intersection away from the Town Center such as at Four Corners. These commercial areas should be kept small in scale to reduce traffic congestion and so that they do not detract from the sense of a single strong commercial center in Sonoma.

### Tourism

Sonoma enjoys, but does not depend on, tourism for an employment base. However, income brought to the community could be increased by providing additional lodging for weekend visitors. Sonoma can become a place for people to spend several days visiting sights within the city as well as further up the Sonoma Valley. The city has the potential as a place for people who merely want to get away to the country to hike, ride horses or relax. To capitalize on this, Sonoma should carefully encourage the development of inns or hotels near the center of the city.

### Industrial and Commercial Policies:

1. The City should encourage the continued diversity and expansion of its employment base.
2. The City should give a special General Plan designation to areas northeast of the present city which have soils suitable for vineyards.
3. The City should give particular attention to the transition area between residential areas and industrial and commercial uses.
4. General industrial development should be guided towards an "industrial park" setting in the southeastern part of Sonoma's General Plan.
5. The City should encourage the development of new commercial facilities to the southwest of the Plaza to promote a pedestrian scale, to ensure the vitality of Sonoma's Town Center



and to preserve a sense of history found to the northeast of the Plaza.

6. Neighborhood Convenience commercial development should be restricted in scale and extent to complement the function of the Town Center.
7. The City should encourage the development of appropriately located additional facilities and activities to accommodate tourism.

## HISTORIC EMPHASIS

### Historic Summary

Mission San Francisco Solano de Sonoma was founded in July, 1823, and was the last of the 21 California missions.

The Pueblo of Sonoma was the northernmost military base of the Mexican government. It was established in 1835 to act as a check on Russian expansion from Fort Ross as well as to control the Indians. The Pueblo became the City of Sonoma in 1850.

Sonoma Plaza was laid out in 1835 by General Vallejo and is currently a City Park, containing the Sonoma City Hall, built in 1908. The Plaza's significance as the site of the Bear Flag Revolt and the first raising of California's state flag has been nationally recognized, and was dedicated as a National Historic Landmark in 1961.

### Present Significance

The impressive characteristic which is present in Sonoma is not its historic past, but that so much of this past has survived relatively intact over nearly a century of growth, change and development. Furthermore, this sense of historic continuity is all the more exciting in that it is being actively used as part of the daily lives of citizens.

Many historic structures are recorded in Federal and State registers. Sonoma State Historical Park, for instance, contains the Mission, the nearby Barracks, Casa Grande, and General Vallejo's home, Lachryma Montis.

Other structures are privately owned and maintained with obvious pride and attention to detail.

The City has responded to these features by instituting design review procedures and the creation of the Old Sonoma Preservation Commission, renamed in 1974 as the Old Sonoma Architectural Commission.

### History and the General Plan

One of the difficulties with identifying individual structures or places as being "historical" is that the process overlooks the merit and significance of the overall setting.

Accordingly, the Plan gives emphasis to a set of citywide features: the historic axial quality of Broadway, the historic street grid system, the backdrop of hills and an historic route through the city.

### Broadway - Creekside Entry Park

Emphasis should be given to the historic Broadway axis by creating a creekside entry park at the foot of Broadway to properly recognize the place where shallow draft ferries were once able to land men and supplies for the city from Schellville and points further south.

### Zone of Historic Influence

Property adjoining both sides of Broadway from the entry park to the Plaza should be part of a larger historic zone. This zone should have special design review over buildings, signs and other



improvements visible from the road.

Land uses should be encouraged which display a rural, scenic character. Set-backs should be instituted to create a proper sense of spaciousness and formality. Existing buildings along Broadway should be retained. Any new uses should be accommodated within these existing buildings and their exterior appearance preserved.

#### Street Grid Pattern

Emphasis should be given to the historic street grid pattern, of which Broadway is the spine, by continuing to implement the historic grid and discourage curvilinear streets. Historic street names originating with the grid should be used.

#### Hill Backdrop

Emphasis should be given to the backdrop of wooded hills behind the Plaza and Vallejo Home by protecting them from development. No east-west roads should be allowed along the foothills behind the Vallejo Home or behind the Veterans Center. The City should work with the State Department of Parks and Recreation to acquire additional hill lands as part of an expanded historic zone including the Mountain Cemetery and adjacent slopes. Also, the City should utilize stringent slope zoning to prevent residential development from creating erosion that would cause siltation of natural creeks. This slope zoning is necessary as well to protect the historic role that hillsides have played as the natural backdrop to the city's development.

#### Historic Emphasis Policies:

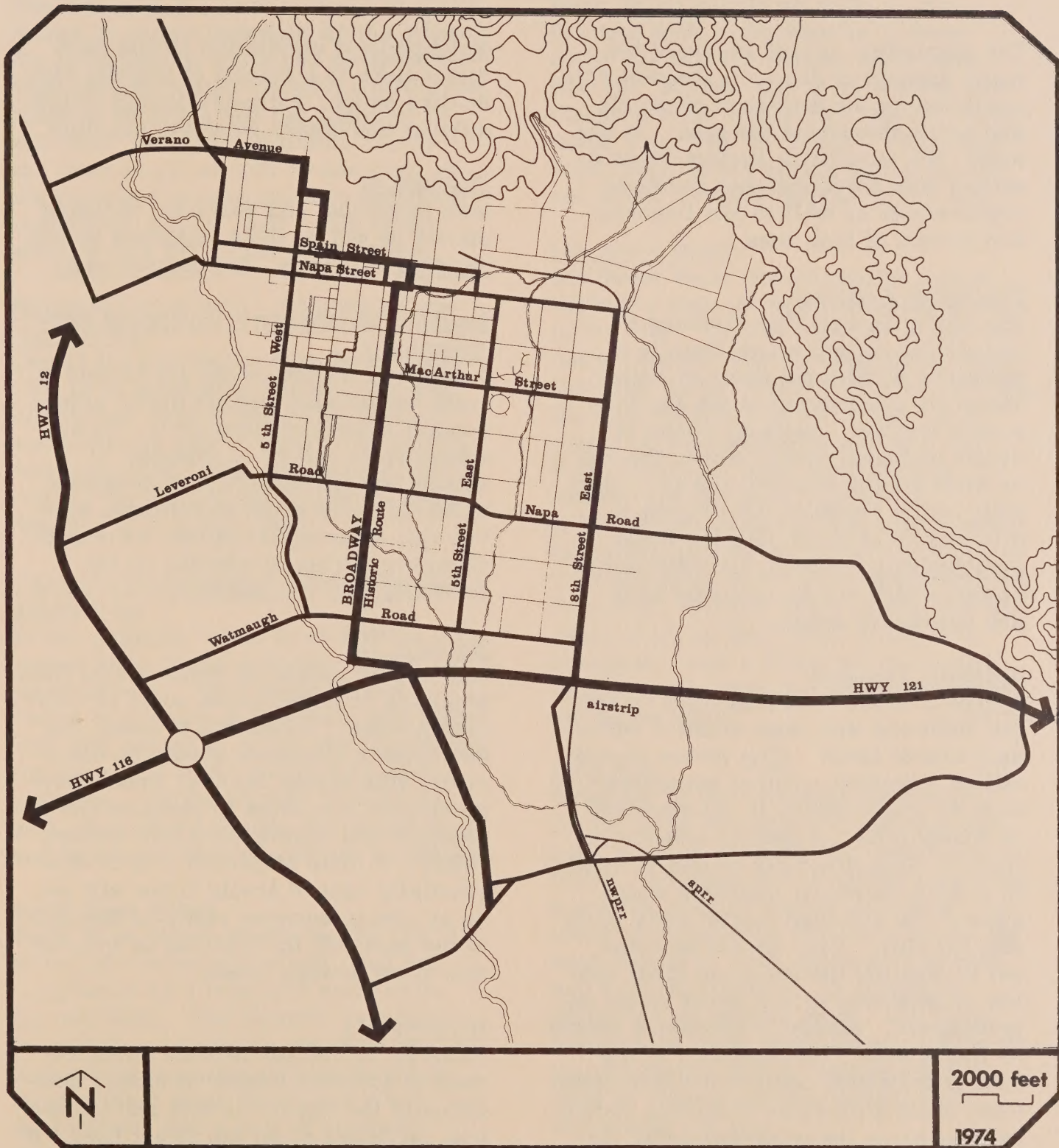
1. The City should recognize a broad zone of historic influence in Sonoma and should develop an historic

route to emphasize Sonoma's overall historic context. (See policy #4 - Circulation).

2. The City should encourage development which complements the semi-rural and historic character of Broadway within a zone of historic influence.
3. The City should implement Sonoma's historic street grid pattern and use original historic street names. (See policy #7 - Circulation).
4. The City should work with the State to acquire land or purchase development rights for property constituting the historic backdrop of hills within the historic zone. Roads and development should not be built in this hillside backdrop area. (See policy #12 - Circulation).



# Circulation



The Hall and Goodhue Community Design Group 100 Bush Street San Francisco, California 94104 415 433-2525



# Circulation

The circulation system is one of the major aspects of Sonoma's General Plan, providing for the movement of people and goods throughout the area. In Sonoma, the circulation system needs to reflect both functional and aesthetic requirements as well as the intensity and pattern of land uses.

## Functional Features

The city's General Plan contains a circulation pattern where there is a hierarchy of different types of routes. These are diagrammed in the Key Proposals section. Regional traffic is shown as being carried around the city on State Routes 121-116 and 12. Citywide traffic concerns are evident in a grid pattern of major streets, while neighborhood concerns are reflected in streets which are designed for local and emergency access.

## Aesthetic Features

Regional routes should be built as scenic highways with their location within agricultural lands. City routes should reflect a historic gridiron pattern as well as orient drivers to the backdrop of nearby hills. A zone of historic influence along Broadway should be used to protect its scenic qualities which make it the principal tourist entry route into the City. Care should be taken not to obstruct the important focal quality of Broadway in any future street improvements. Median landscaping should be low profile. Landscaping, in the form of installing boulevard-sized street trees along both sides of streets should be used as an important aesthetic element in the citywide street grid.

Neighborhood circulation should have direct links to a system of internal plaza-like parks. Pathways should follow streams and creeks wherever possible.

## Discussion

Both functional and aesthetic concerns should be met on three important levels: regional, citywide, and neighborhood.

## Regional Circulation - Functional Considerations

A series of improvements are needed to carry undesirable through traffic around Sonoma rather than through it. To accomplish this change, Highway 12 should be redesignated from Broadway to Arnold Drive south of Petaluma Avenue and Highway 121 should be rebuilt along the alignment adopted by the State Highway Commission.

## Highway 12

Highway 12 should be redesignated from Broadway to Arnold Drive south of Petaluma Avenue. When this is done, the new route's alignment should be coincident with Arnold Drive or immediately parallel to it in order to preserve the impressive and scenic entry into Sonoma Valley. A route alignment that is substantially east of Arnold Drive will not be as scenic because views of the hills to the east will be obscured by vegetation along Sonoma Creek.

## Highway 121

Highway 121 should provide direct access to adjacent industrial areas, specifically the industrial park and industrial facilities along 8th Street East. It should also connect with Broadway, and



be appropriately identified as a scenic entry to the City of Sonoma.

#### Timing

The timing of the improvements to these routes is not as important as the emphasis on designing route 121 as an east-west through route, carrying traffic from Napa to Petaluma and the Highway 101 corridor. Realigned Highway 12, on the other hand, should be designed as the principal access route to Sonoma's commercial center, and to the urban areas within the Valley of the Moon.

#### Regional Circulation - Aesthetic Considerations

One of the key features of the General Plan is to emphasize that the regional circulation system should be used to establish the city's scenic and agricultural preserve, such that nearby industrial or residential development is well removed from either route.

#### Citywide Circulation - Functional Considerations

At the citywide level, most traffic should move along a gridiron pattern of major streets. This pattern forms a series of squares at one-half mile intervals and serves to define the boundaries for the city's urban residential neighborhoods. Of the streets forming this grid, West Napa Street, 5th Street West and Broadway deserve special emphasis.

#### West Napa Street

West Napa Street should be the city's principal commercial street, and has importance as a principal entry route for residents. The street's capacity for additional vehicles could be increased by removing parking lanes or turning West Napa Street and West Spain Street into a pair of one-way routes, with Napa Street being east-

bound and Spain Street westbound. All intersecting north-south streets such as 5th Street West should continue as two-way streets. Adjustments to West Napa Street should be made in conjunction with improvements to State Route 121 and the redesignated Highway 12. At that time there will be sufficient access to the city from the west, rather than from the south. Ultimately, West Napa Street should be the principal street for truck access to the city.

#### 5th Street West

5th Street West should become one of the major internal traffic carriers within the city. This is because of its adequate capacity and its geographic location near areas of higher density housing. Its connections with major east-west routes of Watmaugh, MacArthur, and West Napa and West Spain Streets makes it particularly accessible as well. By emphasizing this route and achieving reductions in the volume of vehicles along West Napa Street and Broadway, ambient noise levels will be reduced along West Napa Street and Broadway, with a trade-off of a modest increase over present conditions along 5th Street West.

#### Broadway

Broadway is the principal entry route for the many visitors who come to enjoy the city's historic and scenic qualities. Accordingly, it should lie within a special zone of scenic influence. In terms of circulation this zone means the road should be considered as a scenic and historic highway. It should be identified on official maps, and have appropriate signs that inform visitors of its importance and of subsequent linkages to other parts of a scenic route throughout the city.



### Historic and Scenic Routes

Broadway's role as a major scenic route should be complemented by designating an historic route which takes visitors from Broadway past historic areas to the resort communities that are to the northwest of the city. This route should take people along 1st Street East, West Spain Street and then past the Vallejo Home along 4th Street West, over to 5th Street West and then out along Verano Avenue. Because the section of the route from West Spain Street to the resort areas is for scenic purposes, it should be designed for leisurely and infrequent travel.

### Parking and Congestion

Parking and congestion can become serious problems in commercial areas where there are inadequate off-street parking facilities, such as at the Plaza. In some cases, congestion is a problem along strip-type commercial developments, even though off-street parking may be available. These conflicts should be reduced by curtailing the extent and amount of strip commercial development on Broadway and West Napa Street. Neighborhood commercial facilities, too, should be encouraged in order to reduce the demand for Plaza parking spaces. Any additional city-wide commercial buildings constructed near the Plaza should provide adequate off-street parking as part of their development. This future parking should be placed behind buildings in the Town Center in order to keep the urban character of building frontages along the street intact. Existing parking lots throughout the city should be screened with appropriate building walls or landscaping. Where additional parking is needed for certain sites, it should be made a condition of land transfer.

### Citywide Circulation - Aesthetic Considerations

Citywide circulation routes should be culturally significant as well as functionally adequate. One important feature that should be retained is the repetition of the overall street grid pattern established by O'Farrell nearly 100 years ago. Curvilinear thoroughfares should be discouraged in order to retain the sense of the city's historic street pattern, as well as the axial views of the surrounding hills. Historic street names should be used for any new routes built within the city.

Major streets should be landscaped using large scale trees along the border of each route. Median strips should be planted with grass or low shrubs. This is necessary to preserve the important views of hills as well as public buildings such as City Hall.

### Neighborhood Circulation - Functional Considerations

Local streets should not be designed for through traffic; rather, they should have only enough capacity for access by personal and emergency vehicles.

Retail facilities should be near each neighborhood area. This proximity should reduce reliance on the automobile, and to that extent, will reduce air pollution, noise pollution and traffic congestion.

### Neighborhood Circulation - Aesthetic Considerations

Neighborhood streets should use the same cultural and aesthetic policies that apply to the citywide street system. The gridiron pattern of streets should orient viewers to the hillsides. Curvilinear streets should be discouraged. Historic street names should be rein-



troduced, and a street tree planting program should be instituted.

Local streets should be planted with medium-scaled canopy trees rather than large-scale ones in order to provide ample shade to pedestrians as well as help to distinguish neighborhood routes from citywide thoroughfares.

#### Park and Pathway Linkages

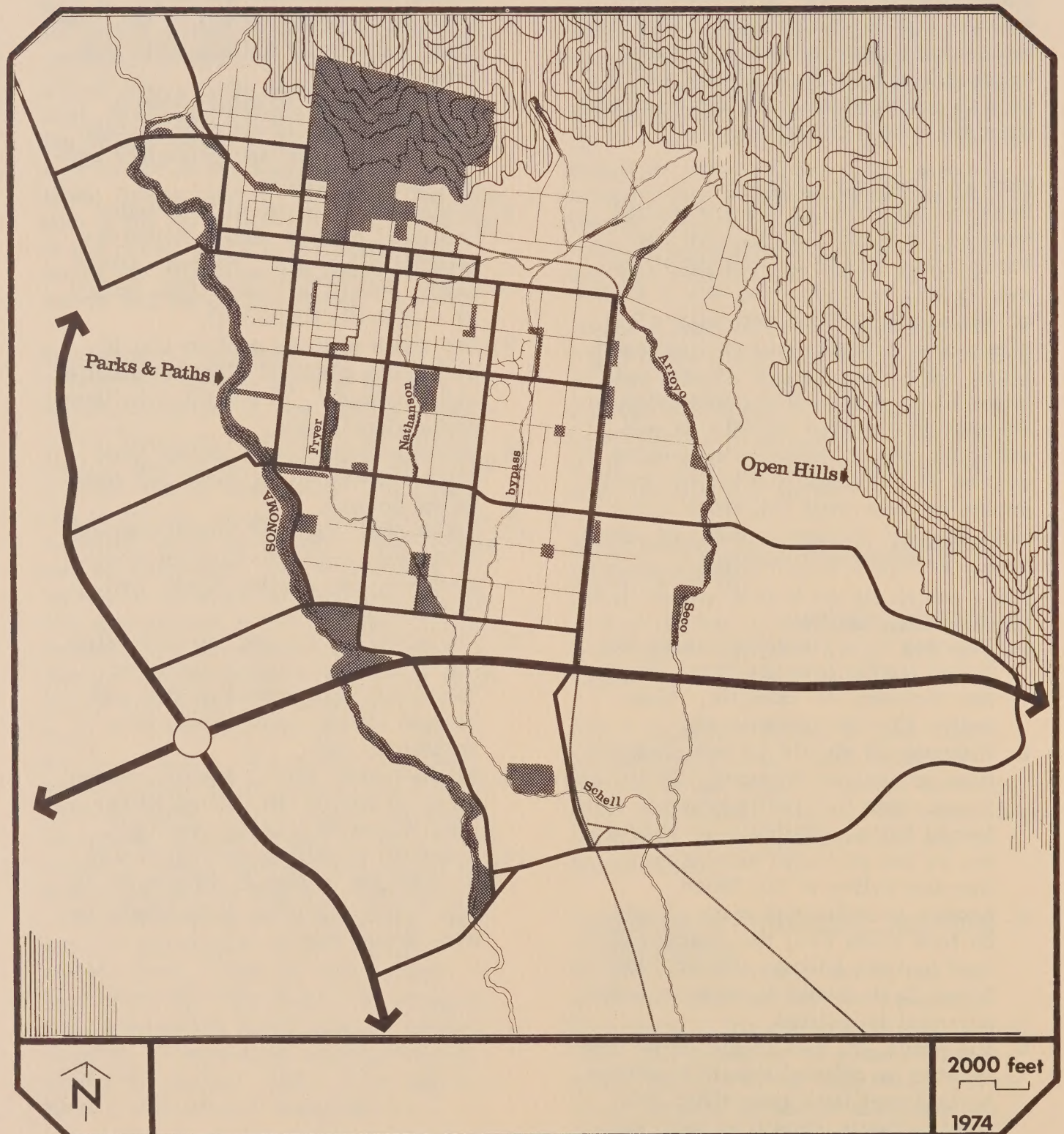
Each neighborhood in Sonoma should have as its focus a plaza-like park. These parks should be located alongside creeks in such a way that a system of inter-neighborhood and intra-city creek-park linkages can be developed. When built, they should connect neighborhoods to civic and commercial destination points such as schools and shopping areas. Links to a regional system of horseback and hiking trails should be made with the old railroad right-of-way, Sonoma Creek and other routes as they are developed.

#### Circulation Policies:

1. Highway 121-116 should carry regional traffic from the Napa area to the Highway 101 corridor. (See policy #2 - Environmental).
2. Highway 12 should be redesignated from its present Broadway-West Napa Street route to a new alignment along Arnold Drive. Highway 12 should act as the principal access route into the Valley of the Moon.
3. Access to industrial areas should be from route 121, the nearby railroad and the Sonoma airport. 8th Street East should be used to serve adjacent industries.
4. Highways 121 and 12 should be designated as official scenic highways. Agricultural land uses along their rights-of-way should be retained. (See policy #2 - Environmental).
5. Broadway should be the scenic, historic access route into Sonoma and should be part of an overall historic scenic route through the city.
6. West Napa Street should be the principal commercial access route into Sonoma.
7. The city should develop along a gridiron pattern of major intra-city streets spaced at approximately one-half mile intervals.
8. The gridiron pattern of both major and local streets should follow the historic alignment. Historic street names should be used. (See policy #3 - Historic Emphasis).
9. The major gridiron pattern should define the edges of urban residential neighborhoods. It should have large-scale street trees.
10. Urban neighborhoods should have streets designed for local and emergency access.
11. Creek-park linkages should contain pathways which permit easy movement between neighborhoods and centers of activity.
12. The pathway network should be tied into a regional system including hiking trails to Schocken Hill and Sonoma Creek. (See policy #9 - Environmental).
13. No east-west routes should be constructed behind the Vallejo mansion. (See policy #3 - Environmental).
14. Adequate off-street parking should be provided in new developments to minimize congestion particularly in commercial areas.



# Open Space





# Environmental Resources

## REGIONAL LEVEL

Sonoma has an obligation to protect its environmental heritage for enjoyment and use by future generations. There is adequate land contiguous to the existing city for future urban uses without encroaching on productive agricultural land or onto steep hillsides.

### Agricultural Considerations

At the regional level Sonoma's Plan displays a zone of open space which should act as a scenic corridor for the regional circulation system. To Sonoma's west, south, east and to some extent its north, the open space consists of economically productive agricultural lands in large parcels. These parcels should be preserved in as large as possible sizes (eg., 40 acres) in the future in order to ensure adequate size for agricultural uses to continue. Dwellings shown in the Plan in this Agriculture "green belt" area are assumed to be associated with the agricultural industry and are generally so few that their number is not included in population estimates for the General Plan. Landholders in this Agriculture "green belt" should be encouraged to enter into open space contracts with the State under the Williamson Act so that their land will be taxed at a rate which reflects its agricultural use.

### Agriculture and the Natural Environment

Aside from its productive capacity and scenic quality, the Agriculture area is important because this large, open, and sometimes wet habitat provides forage and cover for a variety of wild-

life types including wild birds, small rodents, insects and amphibians which are very much a part of Sonoma's rural setting. Quail can be seen near stream channels and in the foothills among shrubs and live oak. Mourning doves feed in open areas within vineyards and orchards. Numerous other birds including white tailed kites, robins, mockingbirds, thrushes, towhees, sparrows and waxwings are supported by small insects and by seeds in this agricultural area.

### Geologic and Seismic Considerations

Sonoma has been constructed on land which consists of a slight alluvial terrace underlain by strongly cemented sedimentary, volcanic and basic rock sources. These materials provide good support for structures and tend to react uniformly under seismic forces. This is important, because the active Rodgers Creek Fault lies to the west of Sonoma Creek. The maximum potential magnitude for an earthquake along this fault has been estimated by geologists to reach 7.0 on the Richter scale. Such an earthquake could cause considerably more damage to structures within the city if the underlying soils consisted of poorly consolidated alluvial soils such as found in the agricultural areas surrounding the city. These areas consist of the hills to the north and northeast, the area south of the realigned, future Highway 121, the area west of Sonoma Creek, and the areas to the east of Arroyo Seco Creek. Fortunately, too, Sonoma's development pattern consists mostly of one and two-story wood frame structures which are flexible under



earthquake loads and tend to absorb shocks well. The City should continue this earthquake resistant pattern to protect lives and property.

#### Open Hillsides and Development Potential

The slopes immediately to the north and northeast of Sonoma are virtually undeveloped except for the Mountain Cemetery site. These hillside areas consistently exceed 30% slope and would require significant grading to accommodate development. More significantly, these mountainous upland areas ranging from 200-1200 feet in elevation present a high potential for erosion. Thus extensive development will aggravate drainage difficulties already existing in the creeks which pass through Sonoma and should be discouraged. In hill areas to the northeast of the city where development may occur, special consideration should be made to protect drainage courses in development proposals. Zoning should only allow 3 units per 10 acres on slopes less than 30% and only one unit per 5 acres for slopes exceeding 30%. Although septic systems can be constructed for waste treatment in hill areas, domestic water will have to be obtained from wells or springs unless costly pumps and water lines are installed as part of Sonoma's municipal system.

#### Natural Features and the Plan

Aside from the scenic qualities, Sonoma's backdrop of hills are important for the wildlife they support. A wide range of natural vegetation exists and the blending of grassland, chaparral and oak woodland habitats accommodates larger wildlife species including squirrels, rabbits and deer. Deer which normally prefer to browse the

dense cover on north facing slopes venture into the Mountain Cemetery and sometimes into gardens along the foothills. The City should utilize the hill area for both educational and recreational purposes. A public trail connecting with pedestrian ways in the city should be constructed in the unused upper portion of the Mountain Cemetery with its terminus at an overlook point on Schocken Hill.

#### Creeks

To the west and east Sonoma's expanded growth should be bounded by Sonoma Creek and by Arroyo Seco Creek. Vegetation along Sonoma Creek in particular makes a strong visual separation between the agricultural areas farther west and the city to the east. The importance of Sonoma Creek as a boundary should be emphasized by developing creekside parks at the foot of Broadway and at the end of West Napa Street. Designation of major creeks as urban boundaries also recognizes the flood potential associated with them. Specifically, the City should designate an appropriate flood plain zone along Sonoma Creek and others extending back from the top of the bank for public safety. A regional hiking and equestrian trail should be constructed within the zone along the length of Sonoma Creek. Access to the water should be provided for picnicking and for creek maintenance.

#### LOCAL LEVEL

Sonoma's rural character and small town scale are evident throughout the city. Nearly one-third of all the private land in the present city limits is largely undeveloped. Sonoma's substantial publicly owned lands amount to over two hundred acres or some 40 acres per 1000



population overall. These areas include the Vallejo Home and Plaza historic sites, schools, the Veterans Memorial and baseball complex, cemeteries, water property and Austin Park. Outside the city limits Sonoma owns the old Sewer Farm site. When public and private open areas are considered nearly one-half of the land within the city limits is relatively open. In addition to the generous amounts of open land is the existence of numerous creeks which have not been encroached upon by development. To ensure the continuation of Sonoma's open feeling, the City should look for opportunities to acquire new parks near residential concentrations and to protect creeks and develop linear parks along them connecting public lands.

#### Neighborhood Identity - Parks and Pathways

Each of the large land areas defined by the major internal circulation grid of approximately one-half mile square, such as that contained by Broadway, 5th Street East, East Napa Street and MacArthur, may be considered a neighborhood. Just as the Town Center is the focus of the community, an internal park will strengthen the identity of each neighborhood. Undeveloped land throughout the city should be looked at for potential acquisition with this in mind. Recommended locations for neighborhood parks are shown in the General Plan Map. The historic street grid system, proximity to significant creeks, focal potential and ability to contribute to an overall pedestrian system throughout the city were primary considerations in determining these locations. In outlying areas, park dedication should be required through the Subdivision Regulations in the general locations shown. Where neighborhoods

have already built up, public acquisition and public easements should be considered as implementing devices.

Neighborhood identity and public safety are promoted by encouraging through traffic to use the major grid streets and discouraging through traffic within the neighborhoods. To achieve this, consideration should be given to the possibility of diverting certain internal streets around neighborhood parks much as the Plaza does in the Town Center. Internal streets, however, should allow for emergency access.

#### Historic Facilities

Historic facilities should be looked at in relation to neighborhood parks when a citywide system of pathways is considered. Abandoned railroad rights-of-way, for instance, should be acquired where appropriate and developed for walking and bicycling. The City should definitely encourage retention of historic sites and buildings such as the Sonoma Depot, which, like neighborhood parks, provide destinations along the linear park system.

#### Creek Protection

Wooded creeks and other open watercourses contribute to Sonoma's rural setting and serve as the city's storm drain system. Older residential areas along Nathanson Creek in particular are enhanced by proximity to a creek. However, as more development occurs in the Sonoma area, there are more roads, roofs and paved surfaces which shed rain water rather than allowing it to pass through the soil into underground aquifers. This means run-off is accelerated during a storm and that drainageways may overflow their banks. Development also often results in some buildings being placed too close to



drainageways where flood protection cannot be easily provided.

#### Flood Plain Zoning

Protection and preservation of creeks requires some improvement and maintenance. It requires keeping urban development far enough away to allow adequate flood protection. And most of all it requires making sure that creeks are visible rather than merely running through backyards. To meet these criteria the City should work with the County Water Agency which has jurisdiction of creeks, by adopting flood plain zoning along significant creeks in the city's Plan area. An adequate zone should be provided to ensure adequate access to creeks. Such a zone should provide space for earth berms, landscaping and linear parks.

#### Bypass Channels

Where neighborhoods have built up and flood plain zoning is impractical, a creek bypass should be considered. A bypass can be completely separate from the existing creek although treated like a branch of the original which is essentially is or it can be parallel as shown in the accompanying diagrams. In both cases, the function of the bypass should be to carry excess runoff during a storm.

#### Residential Access

To make creeks more visible and important to the setting of Sonoma, the City should encourage the orientation of front yards to creeks as shown in the accompanying diagrams. In outlying areas where streets do not exist, streets should be built alongside creeks. In built-up areas the creeks should be recognized as much as possible by recognizing the existence of informal pathways along many of the creeks and

incorporating these paths as part of an overall pathway network.

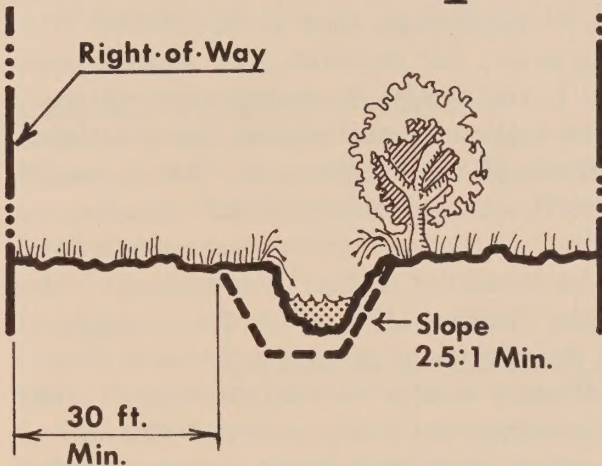
#### Environmental Resources Policies:

1. The City should work with the Local Agency Formation Commission and the County to protect surrounding agricultural lands by discouraging isolated subdivisions and by promoting open space contracts so that land will be taxed at a rate which encourages continued agricultural use.
2. The City should encourage the timely development of a new Highway 121 in the general alignment adopted by the State Division of Highways and should work to assure its designation as an official scenic highway.
3. No public roads should be developed along the foothills in an east-west direction north of Sonoma's Town Center in order to protect Sonoma's unique backdrop of hills.
4. The City should work with the State to acquire additional hillside property within the historic zone shown in the General Plan Map. A public hiking trail should be constructed in the hill area which provides an overlook of the city.
5. The City should discourage residential development on steep slopes north and northeast of the city.
6. The City should insist upon flood control designs which preserve trees and the natural character of Sonoma's creeks.
7. The City should encourage development which is oriented towards creeks and will increase the recreational potential of creeks.
8. The City should encourage a historic pattern of neighborhood parks near the center of residential areas.
9. The City should provide a safe system for pedestrians and bicyclists, separate from major thoroughfares,

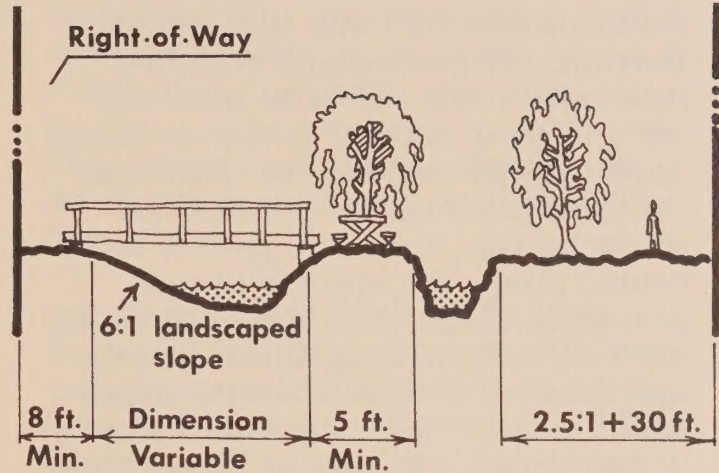


utilizing creeks, neighborhood streets and abandoned railroad rights-of-way which connect neighborhood parks, historic sites and the Town Center.

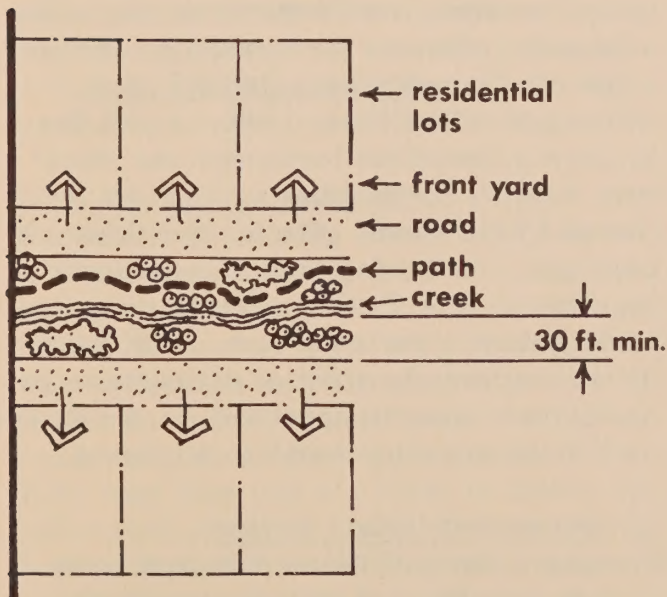
## Creek Concepts



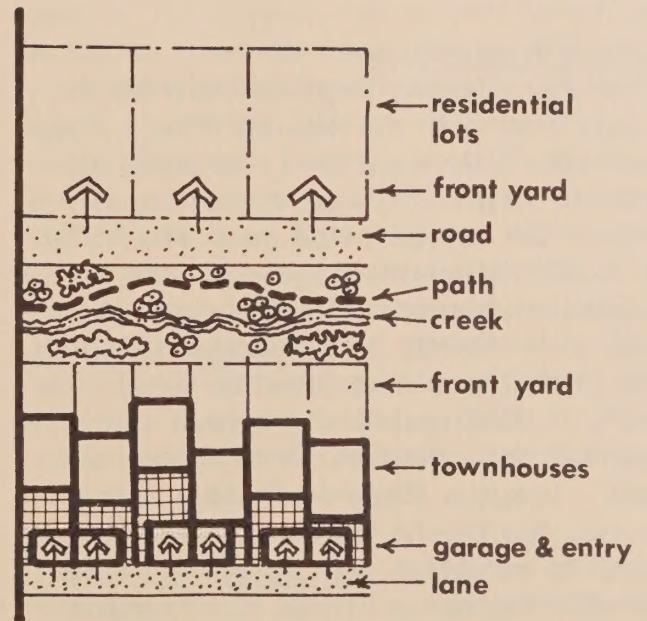
1. Enlarge natural creek or construct bypass to carry flood waters. (section)



2. Construct adjacent bypass for flood waters only. (section)



3. Plan concept



4. Plan concept

Orient development towards creeks.



# Implementation

## IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Sonoma's General Plan is a guide but not a blueprint for future development. It defines environmentally sensitive land areas which should be protected and a range of uses for land to be developed. The General Plan is, therefore, the beginning point for detailed environmental impact reports, precise development plans, and specific finance programs. Its policies should be consistently referred to in determining the appropriateness of development proposals; its text should help to interpret these policies. Mutual support of the General Plan by both public and private sectors should give the Plan credibility and allow the most efficient use of community resources.

## IMPLEMENTATION DEVICES

### Zoning Regulations

The city's Zoning Regulations must be consistent with the General Plan. They describe fully each land use category, setting forth legally permitted uses within the category and such standards as building heights, setbacks and minimum lot sizes. Zoning regulations may also specify performance standards for such things as allowable noise levels affecting residential areas, thus leaving open the method of noise control. Besides these traditional functions, the Zoning Regulations can be used to establish special zones which overlay the basic zones. An example is the historic preservation zone which allows special review of design and appearance in addition to basic zone

standards. Historic buildings are sometimes in jeopardy of being torn down for a bigger, new building. The overlay zone could reduce this threat in the Plaza area, for instance, by making maximum building height match that which exists rather than allowing the standard commercial 50' height. Another example is the flood plain zone which requires special setbacks from watercourses for flood protection and public access. Zoning regulations also cover the planned unit development procedure where a small portion of a larger property is used for development and the remainder dedicated as permanent open space. With planned unit development, density may be higher on the small portion than normally allowed by the zone, but density does not exceed that allowable for the zone when calculations are based on the overall property. Consideration for unique or sensitive features within a development site can be insured by the creation of a Development Control Map which identifies these features and designates appropriate locations and maximum heights for buildings. Just as the General Plan states official development policies, the Zoning Regulations state legally required findings which must be made before a variance from strict standards is granted, exterior appearance in an historic zone is approved, or a planned unit development scheme is approved.

### Environmental Impact Review

Sonoma's General Plan considers many factors including resource conservation, resource management and public safety. These provide an environmental framework which defines potential environ-



mental hazards and against which specific projects may be evaluated. Each detailed Environmental Impact Report, required by law for major new urban developments, supplements the General Plan. Together, they provide valuable information for reviewing project proposals, for suggesting modifications and for exploring other alternatives.

#### Capital Improvement Program

Capital improvement planning is a useful method to determine the scheduling and priority for public projects. The budget discusses the appropriate method of funding whether by earmarking funds in the general City budget, utilizing special tax funds such as the State Gasoline Tax, requesting State or Federal grant monies, or introducing any of the variety of bond approaches. Sewage plant improvements, for instance, should be accomplished soon for public health and safety reasons. An appropriate financing method is the general obligation bond paid for by users of the system. Improvements to park land dedicated through the subdivision process, for example, may be accomplished gradually through funds earmarked in the general City budget.

#### Municipal Legal Authority

For public purposes, Sonoma may use the power of eminent domain to acquire private properties. Similarly, easements of various types may be secured across private properties and development rights can be purchased during development to achieve open space. The City may also use its legal authority to enter into property trade arrangements. A very important area of municipal authority is the ability to work with the County to adjust tax assessments in situations involving property trades.

#### Subdivision Regulations

The City should use subdivision regulations to facilitate creek and hillside preservation. Grading permits, for instance, should be required for land within a flood plain zone or for hillside land above certain slopes in order to provide an additional check on projects in these environmentally sensitive areas. Subdivision regulations are also an appropriate place to specify park dedication as a requirement in future subdivision. This further backs up the planned unit development concept in the Zoning Regulations.

#### Architectural and Site Plan Review

Review of building groups or individual buildings and landscaping is an important City function which may be accomplished by the City Planning Commission as a routing part of project review or by a special commission of citizens appointed to advise the Planning Commission. Design review in general can assure compatible architectural treatment for new buildings. An historical review commission can ensure historical integrity when old buildings are being restored or when new buildings are introduced into an historic zone. Architectural review can be required on all projects within a special design review or historic zone regardless of whether the proposal is consistent with the General Plan and with designated zoning. It can also be required anywhere in the city that a planned unit development is contemplated or where a project is of a scale which would subject it to Environmental Impact Review.

#### Density Transfer

Other methods exist for encouraging development in areas favorable to proper development of the city. One of these



is density transfer, which involves moving credits for residential density from one part of the city to another. In some cases a system of development rights is used, where one owner may sell the rights for developing his land to someone wanting increased development. This technique is being studied by the Sonoma County Planning Department. It should be considered for implementation as part of an overall Sonoma Valley Plan.

#### Historic Zone - Preservation Incentives

Within the proposed zone of historic influence, the City should implement a series of building review, inspection and preservation procedures. These would be used with the goal of preserving the scenic and historic appearance of structures while maintaining their structural and economic adequacy. A number of devices should be considered, including scenic easements, facade easements, a special modified building preservation code, and design reviews.







# Legend

## RESIDENTIAL

|                             |                                                                                   |                                                                                   |                                 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Country<br>3 Units/10 Acres |  |  | Urban<br>3-6 Units/Acre         |
| Suburban<br>1-2 Units/Acre  |  |  | Multi-family<br>7-15 Units/Acre |

## COMMERCIAL

|                             |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Town Center                 |  |  | Special |
| Neighborhood<br>Convenience |  |                                                                                     |         |

## RECREATION & OPEN SPACE

|                                |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Parks/ Paths/<br>Hill Backdrop |  |  | Open Hill Area |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|

## PUBLIC & QUASI-PUBLIC

|                              |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Community/<br>Historic/Other |  |  | Proposed<br>Government Center  |
| Public School                |  |  | Proposed<br>Education Facility |
| Cemetery                     |  |  | Zone of Historic<br>Influence  |

Unincorporated  
Urban Areas 

## CIRCULATION

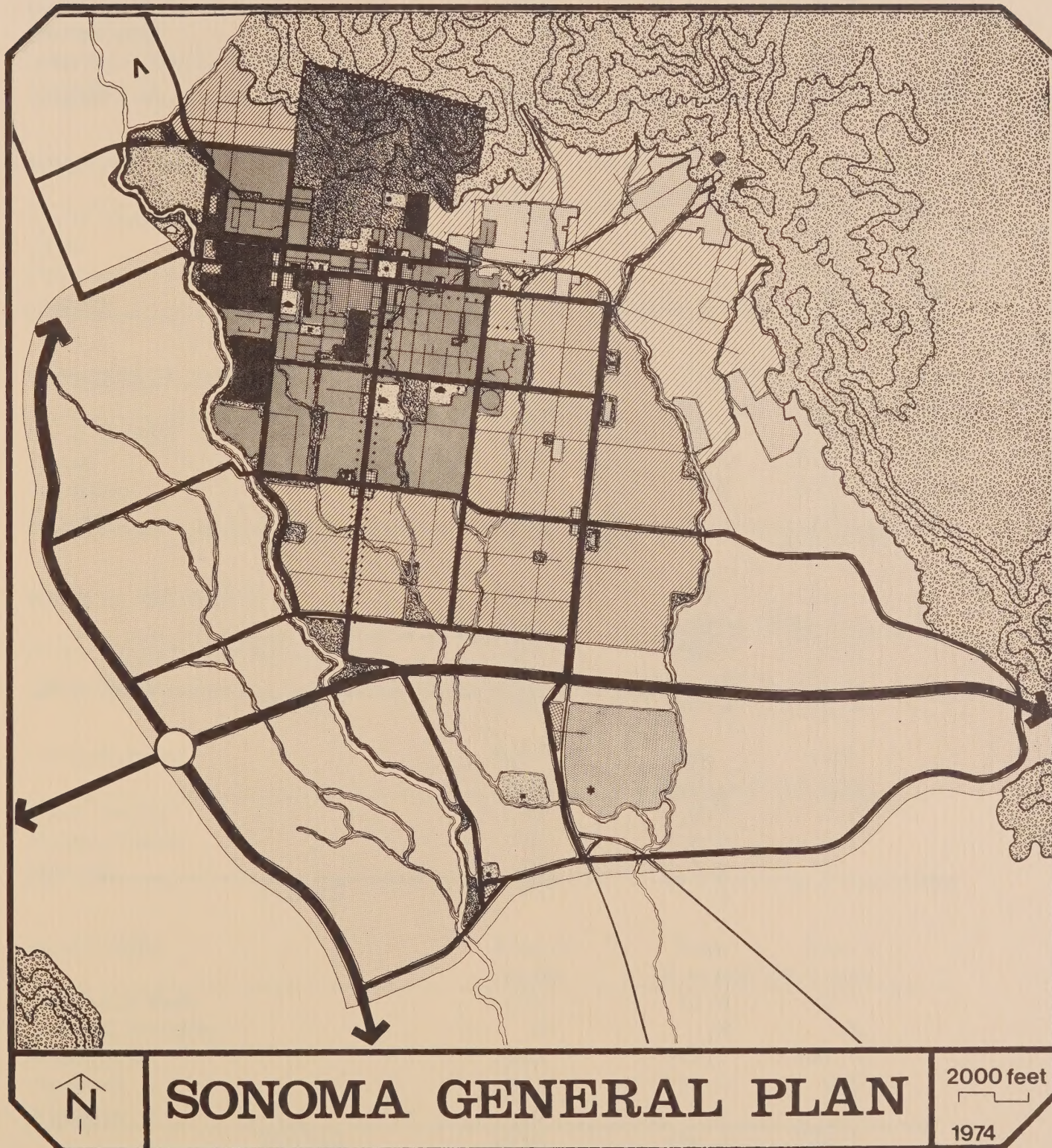
|                   |                                                                                       |       |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Regional Highway  |  |       |
| City Thoroughfare |  |       |
| Local Streets     |  |       |
| Railroad          |  | * Air |

## INDUSTRIAL

|                 |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |             |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Industrial Park |  |  | General     |
| Winery          |  |  | Vineyard    |
|                 |  |                                                                                       | Agriculture |



# General Plan Map



The Hall and Goodhue Community Design Group 100 Bush Street San Francisco, California 94104 415 433-2525







# Appendix

## LAND USE SUMMARY

|                                  | Acres         | % of Total |
|----------------------------------|---------------|------------|
| Residential                      | 3160          | 21.9       |
| Parks & Open Space (incl. hills) | 4244          | 29.4       |
| Community Facilities             | 190           | 1.3        |
| Commercial                       | 96            | .7         |
| Industrial (incl. agriculture)   | 5552          | 38.5       |
| Circulation                      | 1188          | 8.2        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                     | <b>14,430</b> | <b>100</b> |

| HOUSING TYPES | Acres       | Low<br># Units | High<br>Units/Ac. | Low<br># Units | High<br>Units |
|---------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Multi-Family  | 183         | 7              | 15                | 1281           | 2745          |
| Urban         | 795         | 3              | 6                 | 2385           | 4770          |
| Suburban      | 1550        | 1              | 2                 | 1550           | 3100          |
| Country       | 632         | 3/10           | 3/10              | 190            | 190           |
| <b>TOTALS</b> | <b>3160</b> |                |                   | <b>5406</b>    | <b>10,805</b> |

| POPULATION ESTIMATE | Low<br># Units | High<br>Units | Persons<br>Per Unit | Low<br>Population | High<br>Population |
|---------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Multi-Family        | 1281           | 2745          | 2.4                 | 3074              | 6588               |
| Urban               | 2385           | 4770          | 2.4                 | 5724              | 11448              |
| Suburban            | 1550           | 3100          | 2.8                 | 4340              | 8680               |
| Country             | 190            | 190           | 2.8                 | 532               | 532                |
| <b>TOTALS</b>       | <b>5406</b>    | <b>10,805</b> |                     | <b>13,670</b>     | <b>27,248</b>      |

| PARKS & RECREATION          | Total #<br>Acres | High<br># Acres/1000 Pop. | Low          |
|-----------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Parks, Paths, Hill Backdrop | 807              | 59.0                      | 29.6         |
| Open Hills                  | 3437             | 251.4                     | 126.2        |
| <b>TOTALS</b>               | <b>4244</b>      | <b>310.4</b>              | <b>155.8</b> |

| COMMERCIAL    | Total #<br>Acres | High<br># Acres/1000 Pop. | Low        |
|---------------|------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| Town Center   | 46               | 3.4                       | 1.7        |
| Neighborhood  | 20               | 1.5                       | .7         |
| Special       | 30               | 2.2                       | 1.1        |
| <b>TOTALS</b> | <b>96</b>        | <b>7.1</b>                | <b>3.5</b> |

| INDUSTRIAL       | Total #<br>Acres | High<br># Acres/1000 Pop. | Low          |
|------------------|------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Industrial Park  | 211              | 15.4                      | 7.7          |
| General Industry | 8                | .6                        | .3           |
| Agriculture      | 5065             | 370.5                     | 185.9        |
| Vineyard         | 259              | 18.9                      | 9.5          |
| Wineries         | 9                | .7                        | .3           |
| <b>TOTALS</b>    | <b>5552</b>      | <b>406.1</b>              | <b>203.7</b> |



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